Remarks

No amendments are being made. Regarding the response to arguments section of the office action, the following comments are made.

The Applicants appreciate the explanation by the Examiner of interpretation of the claims. The claims specify "processing...which preserves a buffer-to-buffer flow control mechanism of the client signal". In item 2 of the response to arguments, the Examiner tries to argue that "buffer-to-buffer flow control" can be interpreted as a "buffer overflow control of different Ethernet signals. " The applicants have tried very hard to find any way in which this statement of the Examiner can make sense logically. But buffer-to-buffer must mean from one buffer to another buffer. It cannot logically mean one buffer to the same buffer even if the same buffer is used by two different signals. Any reasonable interpretation must have a logical basis. Possibly the Examiner was intending to mean the Examiner regards that "buffer-to-buffer flow control" can encompass multiple buffers in parallel each having their own conventional single buffer overflow control, and that this is equivalent to a single buffer used by different Ethernet signals at different times. This might be called a "buffer-by-buffer flow control". But this cannot be a logical interpretation of a "buffer-to-buffer flow control" because the word "-to-" has a distinct meaning from "-by-" , and the applicants cannot see any logical reason for a person skilled in the art to read the phrase "buffer-to-buffer flow control" as if the word "to" should be replaced by the word "by", which would change the meaning. That a skilled person could not logically interpret "buffer-to-buffer flow control" as "buffer-by-buffer flow control" is confirmed in this case by the fact that the claims specify that the flow control is "of the client signal". The claims would have to say "of the signals" plural, for buffer-by-buffer flow control to be a possible interpretation, and even then there would have to be some reason for ignoring the usual meaning of "-to-".

If the applicants have misunderstood the argument of the Examiner, more detailed explanation would be appreciated, together with grounds for why a skilled person would make the given interpretation.

Regarding the point in item 3 about relying on features not recited explicitly in the claims, there is no need for the buffers to be recited in the claims. The claim specify a method of processing to preserve a mechanism in the signal, that mechanism being a buffer-to-buffer flow control mechanism. That is clearly distinct from preserving a single buffer overflow mechanism, which would be a simpler mechanism than a buffer-to-buffer mechanism. Steps to preserve a single buffer overflow type of mechanism would not be sufficient to preserve a more complex buffer-to-buffer type mechanism, so the type of mechanism that is preserved is sufficient to distinguish the method step of the claims, and arguments of the applicants can validly rely on the type of mechanism. So the arguments rely entirely on the claim features without implying that the buffers or other features from the specification need to be recited explicitly.

Regarding the point in item 4, the same reasons apply. The references to how the buffers can be arranged were only used to explain the interpretation of "buffer-to-buffer" and how it differs from the cited art, and were not relied on as explicit features of the claims.

Regarding the point in item 5, the same reasons apply. The references to having the buffer visible or controlled by the client signal were only used to explain the interpretation of "buffer-to-buffer" and how it differs from the cited art, and were not relied on as explicit features of the claims.

All the points in the response to arguments section have now been dealt with. For a detailed response to the points copied into this second office action from the first office action, reference is made to the last response. Hence, as set out in the last

response, claim 1 is not anticipated. As Jordan relates only to Ethernet and not to a protocol such as Fiberchannel or ESCON, which has a buffer-buffer flow control mechanism, there is nothing in Jordan leading a skilled person to adapt it to reach the claimed invention. None of the other cited references are more relevant, and hence claim 1 is not obvious over Jordan or any combination of references.

Independent claim 16 has corresponding distinctive features of removing part of the client signal, preserving the buffer-to-buffer flow control mechanism of the client signal and maintaining the integrity of the payload of the client signal. Hence it is allowable for the same reasons.

Independent claim 20 is directed to a corresponding method of restoring a client signal by adding an ordered set while preserving the buffer-to-buffer flow control mechanism of the client signal and maintaining the integrity of the payload of the client signal. Hence this is allowable for the same reasons.

Independent claim 24 has corresponding distinctive features of removing part of the client signal, preserving the buffer-to-buffer flow control mechanism of the client signal and maintaining the integrity of the payload of the client signal. Hence it is allowable for the same reasons.
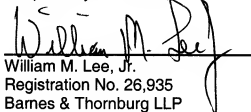
Independent claim 30 has corresponding distinctive features of reducing a bandwidth of the client signal, preserving the buffer-to-buffer flow control mechanism of the client signal and maintaining the integrity of the payload of the client signal. Hence it is allowable for the same reasons.

Independent claim 36 has corresponding distinctive features of removing redundant information from the packet oriented signal while maintaining the integrity of a payload of the packet oriented signal. Hence it is allowable for the same reasons.

Other claims are dependent on an allowable main claim and so are allowable themselves. Accordingly all the points raised have been dealt with, all the claims are allowable and reconsideration is requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

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